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Adoption Day helps to solidify bonds

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CENTREVILLE — "All the kids here are special," St. Joseph County Probate Judge Thomas Shumaker said at the third annual Adoption Day on Nov. 22.

The Probate Courtroom in Centreville was filled with families participating in a variety of adoptions.

"The issue today was diversity," Shumaker said.

Adoption Day celebrated many types of adoption including delayed or foreign, family adoption, agency adoption, and through the Department of Human Services.

Wendy and Tom Cornett have three adopted children, and welcomed Gracie Zhai-Lynn into their family through the delayed adoption.

Chad Behrens shared the story of how he and his wife adopted a baby from China. They began working through the process in January 2003.

"We're so happy, we were able to bring a little girl back to the United States," he said.

The Ahrens family welcomed little Olivia through an inter-state agency adoption. Olivia now has two big brothers, one who cared so much he gave up his perfect attendance record to participate in the Adoption Day.

Although each family situation was unique, they all shared a common bond of love.

Beth Eckert, an active foster parent and adoptive mother, read a poem she wrote for the last child they adopted.

The poem reads in part, "Winston puts down the bag, now he can just pretend, no more real moves, no more going to strangers, he's got a Mom, Dad, brothers and sisters in his family, and that's enough."

Chris Kadulski, director of the Department of Human Services, said, "(We) work together so children can have permanency."

The need for caring homes is not just for adoptions, but also for children in foster care.

People from all different backgrounds can participate in foster care or adoption and impact a child in a positive way.

"Age doesn't have anything to do with it, it's in the heart," Shumaker said.

Adoption Day celebrations are taking place in 40 Michigan counties and will impact the lives of 270 children.

Shumaker thanked the families for opening up their hearts and homes to the children.

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